



Convent Hill, Ballina, Co. Mayo
Tel: 096 22768 - Roll No: 19773N
Email: office@saintnicholas.ie
Website: www.saintnicholas.ie
Charity No. 20140540

ST. NICHOLAS' CODE OF BEHAVIOUR

Introductory Statement

This policy was formulated by the school community of St. Nicholas School in September 2024. This document has also been created in accordance with the requirements of 'Bi Cinealta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post Primary Schools' DES; June 2024 and has been created in partnership with the schools 'Anti Bullying Policy'. It is the vision of the School community that these two documents work in conjunction with one another and are cross referenced accordingly.

It is scheduled to be reviewed in September 2025 or to coincide with the publishing of the new guidelines for Code of Behaviour by the Department of Education (whichever precedes)

Rationale:

It is deemed necessary to review our Code of Behaviour at this time because

- It is an area of concern identified by the school community
- To ensure an orderly climate for learning in the school
- It is a requirement under the Education Welfare Act, 2000, Section 23 (1) which refers to the obligation on schools to prepare a code of behaviour in respect of the students registered at the school. It details in Section 23 (2), that the code of behaviour shall specify:
 - A). The standards of behaviour that shall be observed by each student attending the school;
 - B). The measures that shall be taken when a student fails or refuses to observe those standards;
 - C). The procedures to be followed before a student may be suspended or expelled from the school concerned;
 - D). The procedures to be followed in relation to a child's absence from school.
 - E). To ensure existing policy is in compliance with legal requirements and good practice as set out in Developing a Code of Behaviour; Guidelines for Schools,

Relationship to characteristic spirit of the school

This policy document promotes the right of all individuals to work, learn and play in an environment that is, as far as possible, safe, happy, and conducive to effective work and learning practice. The needs of every individual will be met, in a positively structured way, which precludes any punitive means. In this way, strengths are re-inforced and weaknesses are diminished.

Aims:

- To ensure an educational environment that is guided by our vision statement
- To allow the school to function in an orderly way where children can make progress in all aspects of their development
- To create an atmosphere of respect, tolerance and consideration for others.
- To promote positive behaviour and self-discipline, recognising the differences between children and the need to accommodate these differences.
- To ensure the safety and well being of all members of the school community
- To assist parents and pupils in understanding the systems and procedures that form part of the code of behaviour and to seek their co-operation in the application of these procedures
- To ensure that the system of rules, rewards, and sanctions are implemented in a fair and consistent manner throughout the school.
- To ensure that the individuality of each pupil is accommodated in a relatively disruption-free environment.

Content of Policy

The policy is addressed under the following headings:

- 1. Guidelines for behaviour in the school**
- 2. Whole school approach to promoting positive behaviour**
 - Staff
 - Board of Management
 - Parents
 - Pupils
- 3. Positive strategies for managing behaviour**
 - Classroom
 - Playground
 - Other areas in the school
 - School related activities
- 4. Rewards and Sanctions**
 - Rewards and acknowledgement of good behaviour
 - Strategies for responding to inappropriate behaviour
 - Involving parents in management of problem behaviour

- **Managing inappropriate or challenging behaviour**
- 5. Suspension / Expulsion**
 - **Suspension**
 - **Expulsion**
 - **Appeals**
- 6. Keeping Records**
 - **Class**
 - **Playground**
 - **School Records**
- 7. Procedure for notification of a pupil's absence from school**
- 8. Reference to other policies**

1/ Guidelines for behaviour in the school

In order to lay the foundation for good character formation:

- Self-discipline is cultivated and appropriate behaviour is encouraged.
- Each pupil is expected to be well behaved in-so-far as they understand and show consideration for other children and adults in-so-far as they understand.
- Each pupil is expected to show respect for the property of the school, other children's and their own belongings.
- Each pupil is expected to attend school on a regular basis and to be punctual.
- Each pupil is expected to do his/her best.
- It is acknowledged that factors influencing children's behaviour may sometimes need to be considered and accommodated, and this code diversified to suit individual pupils, as required.

Section 23 (4) of the Act further states that, prior to registering a pupil, the principal teacher shall provide the parents of the child with a copy of the school's code of behaviour and that the principal '*may, as a condition of so registering such child, require his or her parents to confirm in writing that the code of behaviour so provided is acceptable to them and that they shall make all reasonable efforts to ensure compliance with such code of the child*'.

2/ Whole school approach in promoting positive behaviour

The elements of a whole school approach to behaviour include:

- An ethos, policies and practices that are in harmony with other school policies and procedures.
- A teamwork approach to behaviour (Parents/Teachers and Teacher/SNA's and Teachers with each other).
- A whole-school approach to curriculum and classroom management.
- An inclusive and involved school community e.g. (Teachers, SNA's, Parents, S.E.N., NEPS, Behaviour Therapists, Western Care).
- A systematic process for planning and reviewing the behaviour policy.

Staff

- All school policies are reviewed and updated on a regular basis. All staff and the wider school community are involved in-so-far as is possible (e.g. depending on accessibility and availability of personnel).
- All staff are consulted on and are aware of this Code of Behaviour. Temporary staff are informed of the Code of Behaviour and their roles in maintaining a healthy, happy atmosphere in our school. This code of behaviour caters for children who may present behavioural difficulties arising from their special education needs.
- Staff track and record relevant behaviours, as a means to inform their and others' interventions in order to use the behaviours of the students to monitor their needs and development.

The school's SPHE curriculum is used to support the code of behaviour. It aims to help our children develop communication skills, appropriate ways of interacting and behaving, and conflict resolution skills. It also aims to foster self-esteem and to help children accommodate differences and develop citizenship.

Board of Management

- The Board of Management is consulted in reviewing the Code of Behaviour, on a regular basis.
- The Board of Management supports the code of behaviour in the school on an ongoing basis.
- The Board of Management supports the staff in implementing the Code of Behaviour through the provision of training opportunities and staff development.
- Procedures are in place for the Board of Management to deal with serious breaches of behaviour.

Parents

- Co-operation between staff and parents is encouraged through regular and open communication, using Home/school communication books, meeting and phone calls to and from each other to help monitor progress and re-evaluate practices and procedures.
- A representative committee including members of the Board of Management, parents and teaching staff to examine the draft policy and to review the code of behaviour, has been established,
- The draft policy that was reviewed in consultation with staff, is circulated to parents to make suggestions based on this draft policy. *Please note final authority rests with the Board in accepting or rejecting such amendments.*
- The Code of Behaviour is communicated to parents on the enrolment of their child, and their co-operation sought to maintain a cohesive and progressive approach to their child's behaviour and learning.
- Parents are asked to ensure their children attend school regularly and punctually.
- Parents encourage their children to do their best and to take responsibility for their work.
- Parents are aware of and co-operate with the school's rules and system of rewards and sanctions.
- Parents attend meetings at the school if requested.
- Parents help their children with homework if relevant.

- Parents ensure their children have the necessary materials for school, when asked to do so.

Pupils

The concept of rewards and consequences is constantly re-enforced with the children. They are encouraged at all times to be co-operative and helpful to each other and to their teachers and other staff.

3/ Positive strategies for managing behaviour

Classroom

- A programme is structured and an environment is created that is appropriate to the pupil's needs.
- Positive behaviour is re-enforced. A clear system of acknowledging and rewarding good behaviour and sanctions for misbehaviour is in place. These are distinctive to each class, in response to the needs and abilities of the students.
- Potentially disruptive situations are identified through consistent observation and constant documentation.
- The pupil's attention may be distracted or diverted, through various classroom management techniques.
- E.g. Intervention:
 - a) Verbal: say 'stop' whilst using the appropriate sign.
 - b) Physical: Lead pupil away from the situation for a period under supervision; the pupil is then invited back into the group. It may be necessary to repeat this several times.
- Record incidents – date, time and context; a pattern or trigger may emerge.
- Re-arrange personnel involved with the pupil.
- Ensure all reasonable adaptations are made to the environment.
- "Ground rules"/behavioural expectations are in each class, and usually for each individual student, that are consistent with the ethos as expressed in the Code of Behaviour and set a positive atmosphere for learning.
- Teachers ensure that pupils understand and are frequently reminded of how they are expected to behave.
- Classroom management techniques that ensure a variety of activities and methodologies to sustain pupil interest and motivation are used.
- Timetabling is used effectively, in order to encourage maximum participation of the students, at different times of the day.

Playground(s)

- We have a knowledge of playground rule which emphasise positive behaviour and make it clear what activities are permitted.
- Activities are organised in ways that will minimise misbehaviour.
- Teaching playground games to children may be a consideration, adapted to suit different class levels and abilities of students.
- Creation of zones within the playground, providing sections for specific age groups, quiet activities etc. are being considered.
- SNA's and ancillary staff engage and support the pupils at all times, with the teachers.
- The arrangements for wet days include: use of the school hall and classrooms with supervised activities. Eg., board games, table games, racquet games, music activities, relaxation exercises, team games.

- Pupils going to and returning from the playground are supported by staff at all times. Some may need a physical and/or verbal prompt. Others may be more independents.

School related activities

Standards and rules contained in the Code of Behaviour usually apply in any situation where pupils are still the responsibility of the school during school tours, extra-curricular activities, shopping etc.

Behaviours on school transport:

See Appendix 1 on 'Guidelines for Discipline and Procedures for dealing with Alleged misbehaviour on School Transport.'

4/ Rewards and Sanctions

There are rewards and acknowledgement of good behaviour.

Prevention rather than intervention is the aspiration. In this regard, staff will be proactive. All pupils will be treated as individuals with positive learning programmes in place.

- Disciplinary issues will be dealt with by teaching rules and the consequences of following the rules or breaking them.
- Good behaviour is publicly recognised and acknowledged in the school eg: use of notice boards, photographs of group activities displayed in the school, newsletters to parents, etc.
- Pupil achievement is acknowledged during assemblies, end of year awards, graduation ceremony, etc.
- Specific rewards are used at certain class levels, depending on the abilities and understanding of the students eg. Stars, Choice Boards, Praise etc.
- 'Good News' is communicated to parents, other classes, the principal, where appropriate, with displays on school walls, 'Good news' folders, etc.

Strategies for responding to inappropriate behaviour:

- These have been discussed given the context of our school. Inappropriate behavioural issues will require a different level of intervention, which may include:
 - a/ teaching new appropriate skills
 - b/ teaching alternative behaviour
 - c/ teaching self-management and self-control strategies
 - d/ as well as teaching the rules and consequences

Also used where appropriate, may be:

- a/ verbal reprimand
- b/ removal from the group (in class)
- c/ withdrawal of privileges
- d/ withdrawal from the particular lesson or peer group
- e/ referral to Western Care Behaviour Support Team

- f/ Referral to support teams with the CDNT Team
- g/ risk assessment strategies will be reviewed, or established, with the support of Psychologist, Behaviour Support Therapist

- Dealing with all behavioural issues is usually a long-term process. Ideally, pupils with behavioural issues will be identified by early assessment and will therefore have their own individual behaviour plans incorporated in their I.E.P's.
- Initially, inappropriate behaviour will be dealt with by the class teacher by use of some or all of the strategies aforementioned. If it is more serious or persistent, the parents may be involved, or the principal and or Board of Management are involved.
- Staff ensures consistency in the application of appropriate sanctions, with a whole school approach.

Challenging Behaviour:

Challenging Behaviour is defined as:

Behaviour within the context of the school, which prevents participation in appropriate educational activities; often isolates pupils from their peers; affects the learning and functioning of other pupils; drastically reduces their opportunities for involvement in ordinary community activities; makes excessive demands on teachers, staff and resources; places the pupil or others in physical danger; and makes the possibilities for future placement difficult.

|It is also defined as:

Behaviour of such intensity, frequency or duration that the physical safety of the person or others is likely to be placed in serious jeopardy.

In the case of challenging behaviour being manifested, the following actions may be taken:

- Structure a programme and environment that is more appropriate to the pupil's needs.
- Reinforce positive behaviour at class level and throughout the school.
- Avoid potentially disruptive situations as identified by observation of ABC Charts documented consistently.
- Distract and divert the pupil's attention.
- Intervene: eg., exclude the pupil from the room for a period under supervision. After a time they are invited back into the room. It may be necessary to repeat this several times.
- Notify other personnel, hitherto not involved.
- Reassess point 1 of these steps if the behaviour continues.
- Inform the principal.

If the above interventions have not been successful, then

- Withdraw other pupils.
- Staff allow pupil time to become calm and approachable.
- Physical intervention.
- The Calm Approach may be used.
- Contact parents.
- Document all aspects of the incident.

- Personal Risk Management strategies may be put in place with appropriate support from Western Care Behavioural Support Therapist and/or Psychologist.

Involving parents in management of problem behaviour

- Parents are encouraged to contact the school if they have concerns.
- Parents are contacted, as deemed appropriate, in certain situations, by the class teacher or the Principal.
- Co-operation between staff and parents is encouraged through regular and open communication, using Home/school communication books, meetings and phone-calls to and from each other to help monitor progress and re-evaluate practices and procedures.

5/ Suspension / Expulsion

The entitlement to education is protected in a range of constitutional and legal provisions and in human rights conventions. These legal protections for the individual student's right to education mean that decisions to suspend or expel a student are open to appeal and may be subject to judicial review by the High Court.

Suspension

Where a preliminary assessment of the facts confirms serious misbehaviour that could warrant suspension, the school will observe the following procedures:

- Inform the student and the parents about the complaint.
- Impress on a student and their parents the seriousness of the behaviour.
- Records of all meetings will be retained.
- A pupil will not be suspended for more than three days, except, in cases where the Principal deems that longer period is needed in order to achieve a particular objective. In such cases, a period of up to ten days may be considered with the Board of Management.
- In the case of an immediate suspension, parents must be notified, and arrangements made for them to collect the pupil.
- Give parents and student an opportunity to respond.
- Fair procedures as per the N.E.W.B. 2008 Guidelines will be followed.

Expulsion

Under the Education Welfare Act, 2000, *'A student shall not be expelled from a school before the passing of twenty school days following the receipt of a notification under this section by an educational welfare officer'* (Section 24(4)). It is the right of the Board of Management to take *'...such other reasonable measures as it considers appropriate to ensure that good order and discipline are maintained in the school concerned and that the safety of students is secured'*. (Section 24(5))

Expulsion is seen as a proportionate response to a student's behaviour, and will only be used in extreme cases. In such cases, when and only when all other strategies have been applied, will expulsion be considered. See page 80, Guidelines – NEWB.

A proposal to expel a student requires serious grounds such as that:

- The student's behaviour is a persistent cause of significant disruption to the learning of others or to the teaching process.

- The student's continued presence in the school constitutes a real and significant threat to safety.
- The student is responsible for serious damage to property.

6/ Keeping Records

In line with the school's policy on record keeping, and data protection legislation, records are kept in relation to pupils' behaviour.

7/ Procedures for notification of pupil absences from school

The Education Welfare Act, 2000, Section 23 (2)(e) states that the Code of Behaviour must specify, *"the procedures to be followed in relation to a child's absence from school."* Section 18 stipulates that parents must notify the school of a student's absence and the reason for this absence.

- The school's policy in relation to explanation of pupil absences applies. Parents/guardians send in a note informing teachers in writing the reason for their child's absence from school.
- These notes are signed and dated. They are retained by the school as per the school records policy.
- The school uses the standard forms to report on pupil absences to the National Education Welfare Board.

8/ Reference to other Policies

Other school policies have a bearing on the Code of Behaviour e.g.

- SPHE Plan
- Anti-bullying
- Harrassment
- Sexual Harrassment
- Enrolment
- Record keeping
- Home/School links
- Health & Safety
- Equality
- Special Educational Needs

Success Criteria

- Positive behaviour in class rooms, playground and school environment.
- Practices and procedures listed in this policy are being consistently implemented by teachers.
- Positive feedback is received from teachers, SNA's, parents and pupils.

Roles and Responsibility

Name the people who have particular responsibilities for aspects of the policy. E.g.

- The Board of Management will ratify this policy. The school community has responsibility for the implementation of this policy.

- The core committee will co-ordinate and monitor the implementation.

Implementation Date 01/10/2024

The operation of the revised policy will be reviewed and, if necessary, amended, in three months, and following ratification, will be reviewed on an annual basis thereafter.

Ratification & Communication

BOM meeting to discuss elements of policy: Yes

Circulation of policy to parents: Yes

Review & Monitoring:

This policy will be monitored and reviewed by the Board of Management on an annual basis and when the need arises. The Board of Management will ensure that adequate training and support is provided for all staff.

Policy adopted by the Board of Management on 27/01/2025

Signed:


Chairperson

Date:

27/1/2025